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MOYNIHAN'S SURPRISE
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Sen. Daniel Moynihan wrapped himself in the flag when, filled with righteous indignation, he resigned as vice-chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee in a protest against the Reagan administration.

But in all probability, the much-publicized move will prompt few, if any, substantial results.

First of all, Moynihan is not -- repeat NOT -- resigning from the committee. He is only giving up a secondary leadership post.

In fairness, there are unique circumstances where the vice-chairman plays a key function and receives advance briefings. But even one Moynihan aide noted that in most cases as vice-chairman "you aren't privy to anything the others aren't privy to."

In a statement announcing the decision, the New York Democrat blamed the lack of an adequate briefing by the Central Intelligence Agency on the mining of Nicaraguan ports -- an omission Moynihan saw as a breakdown of a "trust relationship" necessary between the panel and the intelligence community.

"If this action was important enough for the president to have approved it in February, it was important enough for the committee to have been informed in February," he said in his official statement.

"I had thought this relationship of trust was securely in place. Certainly the career service gave every such indication. Even so, something went wrong, and the seriousness of this must be expressed," he said.

It seems from his statement that the senator was upset about a break of trust with the entire 15-member committee, not just the leadership. However, he apparently didn't feel the problem was serious enough for him to resign from the panel -- a move which undoubtedly would have been much more meaningful.

What Moynihan's people also left unsaid, until asked, was that under committee rules, the senator is scheduled to leave the panel at the end of 1984 because he will have served the maximum eight years.

And while the Senate may consider changing that rule, the area is one where Moynihan's aides engage in some tortured logic.

On the day after the announcement, Moynihan's office said the senator did not step down from the committee altogether because -- since he plans to leave at the close of the year -- to do so now would be "meaningless."

Moynihan apparently does not consider resigning as vice-chairman -- which logic dictates he also was going to have to do at the end of the year -- as an equally meaningless act.

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